negotiations. Capital-based officials from the Department of Commerce and from other concerned administrative Ministries/Departments, including those related to agriculture, are deputed to participate in the negotiations as necessary, apart from representation from the Permanent Mission of India to the WTO at Geneva. The negotiators work within the parameters and negotiating strategy determined by Cabinet Committee on WTO Matters.

Pesticide content in tea

614. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Tea Board has received proposals from the European Union to furnish details of the requisite level of pesticides in Indian tea;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Tea Board has sent any reply in the matter;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether it is also a fact that Indian tea has to raise its overall standards to cater to the European Market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) and (b) Tea Board has not received any formal proposal in this regard. However, at a joint meeting held on 13th June 2003 at Brussels between the members of an Indian tea delegation and the representatives of European Commission, issues relating to maximum residue limits were discussed. During this meeting, the European Commission stated that it would be open to receiving data and dossiers in a structured format from third countries on an on-going basis.

(c) and (d) Tea Board has submitted detailed data on pesticide residue for six chemical compounds to the European Commission on 22.9.2003 and has proposed for harmonization of maximum residue limits based on field experiments carried out by the Indian Tea Research Institutes.

(e) Since maximum residue limits in European Union are stringent, the export of Indian tea needs to be done after proper evaluation of residue levels and the residue contents in tea are tested to conform to those

standards. There are no complaints regarding pesticide residue in teas exported from India to the European Union. The tea industry in India is well aware of the European Union regulations on pesticides and the producers of tea are cautious and are conforming to the maximum residue limits. It may also be mentioned that teas are produced in India in accordance with the quality standards prescribed under Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, which includes specifications for residue contents.

Representation by Coffee growers

615. SHRI K.B. KRISHNAMURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether there has been any representation from the Coffee growers from Karnataka to waive loans and to provide minimum support price for Coffee; and

(b) if so, the action, if any, taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGOVAN): (a) Government of India has received representations from coffee growers from Karnataka for providing certain relief including waiver of loans etc. to the coffee growers.

(b) The Government of India is aware of the difficulties being faced by the coffee growers due to the low prices of coffee and has taken a series of steps for the benefit of coffee growers. The steps include re-phasement/ restructuring of loans taken by the coffee growers from commercial banks by way of Special Coffee Term Loan (SCTL), interest subsidy to large and small coffee growers on repayment of working capital loans taken from financial institutions, reduction of import duty on specified machinery for coffee sector to 5% to enable the industry to improve the quality and productivity of coffee for making it globally competitive. Commercial banks have also agreed to extend crop loans upto a maximum of Rs. 50 lakhs at 9% interest so as to benefit the coffee growers having land holdings upto 60 ha. In addition, the Government of India has also set up a Price Stabilisation Fund with a corpus of Rs. 500 crore for the benefit of tea, coffee, rubber and tobacco growers.